

Some common questions answered by Sarah Platt Decker. late president General federation of women's clubs and of the Denver woman's club New York City National American woman suffrage association 505 Fifth Avenue 1913.

Some Common Questions Answered

By SARAH PLATT DECKER Late President General Federation of Women's Club and of the Denver Woman's Club

So much has been said and written on the matter of the working of equal suffrage in Colorado that it is difficult to present it in any new phase. I shall attempt to give only an individual opinion upon the following much-disputed questions:

1. DO THE EARNEST, HIGH-MINDED WOMEN OF COLORADO VOTE? YES, most emphatically. I do not hesitate to say that the best women of Colorado have far more conscience in filling their responsibilities as voters than the men of the same class. It is also true that women of standing in the community have great influence with men who are not particularly interested in public affairs. We are constantly asked by visitors to Colorado, "How do you have time to vote?" as if voting was like eating or bathing. It takes just about one hour in a year to cast all the ballots necessary and allowable.
2. DOES NOT THE VOTE OF THE DISREPUTABLE, LOW CLASS OF WOMEN COUNTERBALANCE THE BETTER ELEMENT? NO; the women of the half-world generally do not vote. They are constantly changing their residences and their names. They do not wish to give any data concerning themselves, their age, names or number and street; they prefer to remain unidentified. Occasionally some disreputable master compels these slaves to vote for his own purposes, but that is a rare occurrence.
3. IS IT NOT THE CASE THAT WOMEN GENERALLY VOTE AS THE MEN OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD DICTATE? NO. Such has not been my observation or experience. Among the laboring class, if the wife cannot vote as her husband desires, and he is not willing she should make her own choice, she refuses to vote at all. I have been surprised at the honest maintenance of opinion in this regard among the wives of laboring men. One of the most cultivated, beloved and influential women of the State was sitting as a delegate in one party convention, not long since, while her husband was at the same time addressing another assembly representing opposite party views. But the situation excited no comment. Suffrage makes women individuals. 1 LC

4. HAS THE WOMAN VOTE WHOLLY PURIFIED POLITICS, AND HAS IT BANISHED SALOONS? NO, to both questions. It would be beyond reason to expect such a result. Women have been in churches and in society since the beginning of time, but there are still vicious minds and sinful deeds in both religious and social circles. The most we assert is that if we pour a clear stream into a muddy one, we shall have a "moving of the waters" for betterment. The presence of women at the polls as officers and voters has brought quiet and order, while party conventions are much freer from personal wrangles, profane language and vulgar allusions, because women are sitting as delegates.

5. HAS WOMAN SUFFRAGE BEEN A SUCCESS? YES. All thinking women admit that we have made some mistakes since we have had the right of suffrage. But that has been the experience of all newly-enfranchised people. In the beginning of equal suffrage in Colorado, the woman voters had no guide except the traditions and advice of the men of their families and acquaintance. That teaching was the old one of party politics. We followed a blind lead; and to me it was a terrible awakening to discover that my party was just as bad as the other, and the other party fully as high-minded in its purposes as mine. But in spite of mistakes, disappointments or discouragements, there is an indescribable uplift in the thought that one is no longer classed with "criminals, paupers, and idiots." There is a splendid womanly independence in being a voting citizen, and an absorbing interest in fulfilling the duty of citizenship; and there is a much more chivalrous devotion and respect on the part of men, who look upon their sisters not as playthings, nor as property, but as equals and fellow citizens.

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